

Critical Race Theory in the LIS Curriculum

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ABSTRACT

Purpose – We examine the reading lists for required foundational library and information science (LIS) courses at the top 20 American Library Association-accredited LIS programs in North America; explore the extent to which critical race theory (CRT) and other critical literatures, methods, and approaches were engaged; and discuss the implications of the findings for LIS education.

Methodological Approach – We conducted quantitative and qualitative content analyses of foundational required readings for the top 20 Master of Library Science/Master of Library and Information Science programs (as ranked by U.S. News & World Report). The sampling process was twofold. The initial sampling included development of the foundational course sample, and the secondary sampling included development of the sample of required readings.

Findings – The vast majority of the required foundational courses examined provided students with little to no exposure to CRT or critical theory.

Originality/Value – CRT and its related concepts provide a structural framework for preparing LIS students and graduates to recognize and address racism, to understand “how power and privilege shape LIS institutions and professional practice” (Cooke, Sweeney, & Noble, 2016, p. 107), and to embrace social justice as an LIS value. Incorporating CRT into existing courses is the first step in pushing the profession in this direction.

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Introduction

Research has shown that, despite the increasing diversity of the United States, the racial climate of libraries and the field of librarianship has not improved. Librarianship is still predominantly white, and libraries are still perceived as unwelcoming places by many patrons of color (cf. Furner, 2007; Gonzalez-Smith, Swanson, & Tanaka, 2014; Pawley, 2006). This stagnation has stymied attempts to diversify the field, as librarians of color find themselves and their experiences out of sync with the “colorblind” values embraced by LIS research, teaching, and practice (Hathcock, 2015; Honma, 2005; Vinopal, 2016). The recent flood of news about algorithmic bias (Kirchner, 2015) and racism in the online sharing economy (Noble, 2014) has demonstrated that critical awareness about race and ethnicity is also vital for the training of ethically and socially responsible information science students, who go on to create technological infrastructures.

Pawley (2006) argues that race is “the most central-and the most contentious” dimension of diversity, noting that “LIS practitioners and educators tend to avoid the *R* word, and in LIS generally race remains not only understudied but also poorly understood” (p. 151; emphasis in original). She contends that by not confronting racism, not understanding its place as a defining dimension in American society, and not examining the roots of our racialized thinking as individuals, and as a society and a field, the library community helps to perpetuate it (p. 153). She concludes that LIS faculty must foreground the issue of race in their courses if LIS programs and libraries are to become “places where whiteness is no longer central and people of color are no longer marginalized” (p. 153).

Although ALA accreditation requires that programs include some form of diversity in their coursework, this coursework is often siloed into optional, standalone diversity courses and few of them include in-depth discussions of race or racism (Al-Qallaf, & Mika, 2013; Pawley, 2006; Schroeder & Hollister, 2014; Subramaniam & Jaeger, 2011). A 2015 study of 45 instructors who had expressed an explicit interest in diversity in librarianship found that the faculty members surveyed were able to identify opportunities and strategies for integrating diversity and social justice topics into the core curriculum (Kumasi & Manlove, 2015), yet how widespread this understanding (and practice) is, among LIS educators is unknown. Also unknown is the degree to which LIS educators understand the need to include issues related to race, power, and privilege in diversity and social justice discussions.

A large (and growing) body of research and theory in legal studies and education has begun to translate critical race, gender and ethnicity theory to practice and education in those fields (Leckie & Buschman, 2010). Critical literatures and methods that examine the ways that racism is embedded into the values of LIS are slowly being accepted in LIS research and publication (cf. Cooke, 2014; Hall, 2012; Kumasi, 2011; Noble, 2014), but it appears that the same may not hold true for LIS education. In their study of librarians, Schroeder & Hollister (2014) found that while many participants reported coming to LIS programs with some exposure to critical theories, few of them (14%) had been exposed to it in an LIS program. Teaching students strategies for serving diverse populations without exposing students to theoretical frameworks results in an oversimplified understanding of race, ethnicity, power, and privilege. This leaves students without a broad understanding of public institutions’ role in perpetuating social inequities. It also leaves them unprepared for critical engagement with issues beyond those explicitly covered in their classes. Including critical

theories and literature in required coursework gives students a foundation from which to approach a range of practical issues in the classroom and in the workplace, and provides “a basis for librarians’ actions in furthering various causes of social justice” (Schroeder & Hollister, 2014, p. 114). Schroeder & Hollister (2014) also argue that critical theories provide the field with “a useful philosophical basis for the discipline” (p. 114).

Epistemology, methodology, and theory frame the landscape of knowledge in the classroom and in the field. Even when they are not explicitly aware of it, students’ learning is shaped by the ways of knowing, investigating, and recording that are accepted in academia generally, and in information science specifically (Dick, 1999). Traditionally, social institutions, including universities, have reflected a dominant Western ideology that privileges white, non-disabled, Eurocentric, middle class, heterosexual ways of knowing, maintains the status quo, and embeds power and privilege in the dominant group. Librarianship is no exception (Bourg, 2014; Brook, Ellenwood & Lazzoro, 2015; Honma, 2006). As more women and people of color have joined university faculty, “the formerly unquestioned and opaque assumptions at the root of these institutions began to be questioned by people outside the traditionally privileged classes, and those biases of privilege came under more and more scrutiny, analysis, and critique” (Schroeder & Hollister, 2014, p. 92). Critical theories question the status quo in Western thought, culture, and society and ask questions such as: “Who or what is heard? Who or what is silenced? Who is privileged? Who is disqualified? How are forms of inclusion and exclusion being created? How are power relations constructed and managed” (Cannella, 2010, para. 7, quoted in Schroeder & Hollister, 2014, p. 92).

In this study, we examine the reading lists for required foundational LIS courses at the top 20 ALA accredited LIS programs in North America, explore the extent to which critical race theory (CRT) and other critical literatures, methods, and approaches were engaged, and discuss the implications of the findings for LIS education. What readings did all students in these 20 programs have to read to graduate? What epistemological and philosophical stances were reflected in the course material? Specifically, we examine the following research questions:

- To what extent do foundational required readings for MLS/MLIS students at the top 20 ranked programs address critical literatures, theories, and concepts?
- To what extent do foundational required readings for MLS/MLIS students at the top 20 programs address Critical Race Theory (CRT), a theoretical framework that recognizes that racism is engrained in the fabric and systems of American society, and associated concepts?

Background

Critical Frameworks: Important Concepts for Library Students

CRT was originally developed among black feminist scholars as a form of epistemological resistance to neoliberal positivism (Ladson-Billings, 1998), and conceptually as an alternative to the veneer of colorblind multiculturalism (Tate, 1997) that represented equality in legal studies. Tate (1997) writes that U.S. law, reflected a “normative principle of colorblindness” (p. 202) that did not represent the realities of people of color. Without explicit

examination of race, these discrepancies could not be confronted. CRT challenged the idea that any acknowledgement of racial identity (i.e., rejection of colorblindness) was an exercise in racism. Instead, it focused explicitly on the influence of racial identity on social justice and civil rights, and the social mechanisms that caused de facto segregation and discrimination. Since its inception, CRT has been embraced by other disciplines, and has expanded to include the experiences of communities other than African Americans (Brayboy, 2006; Haney Lopez, 1996; Museus and Iftikar, 2013; Trucios-Haynes, 2000-01). It has also served as the basis for critical gender studies.

In LIS programs, we educate students to understand user information behaviors and needs, and to design services and systems intended to serve users in all communities. CRT provides useful concepts and frameworks for accomplishing this in ways that acknowledge a diverse range of experiences. Engaging students with critical approaches teaches them to be thoughtful and methodical in their consumption of the status quo, and judicious in their examination of contested topics (Leonard & Smale, 2013). Explicit incorporation of CRT and social justice literature into LIS education means teaching students to engage in anti-racist research, pedagogy and practice through examination of relationships among racial identity, privilege, power, oppression, social norms, and information values. It means challenging the assumptions inherent in our understandings of the interactions between people and information systems (human or machine), and teaching students to critically examine the historical and current role of the library in societies and communities. Finally, it means talking openly about issues of race, gender, ability, equality, equity, and power. Librarians and libraries affect communities and people. Helping students to build intentional, critical approaches to practice and research gives them tools for successfully working with their communities, and helps them to avoid unintentional perpetuation of systems of inequality.

Whites Only: A History of Racial Exclusion in LIS

American libraries have reflected larger public struggles with racism since their inception. Prior to 1900 few American libraries provided services of any kind to people of color. The very few that were created after 1900 mainly focused on providing services to select African-American communities (Figa and Mcpherson, 2005). In 1905, for example, the Louisville Free Public Library opened the first separate public library facility for Black Americans. Other African American communities followed their lead, founding libraries to provide reading materials and community spaces for discussion and education (Digital Public Library of America, n.d.). There is very little historical data on the libraries in other communities of color, but Patterson (1998) notes that the Colorado River Tribal Council in Arizona established the earliest recorded tribal library in 1958. During Civil Rights movement of 1960s, segregated libraries were challenged and the passage of the Library Services and Construction Act in 1964 marked the first time that the field acknowledged the needs of Spanish-speaking communities in America (Guerena and Erazo, 2000).

Many of the same patterns of exclusion exist in libraries and LIS programs today. The field of librarianship still largely represents a monoculture (Brook et al, 2015), and continues to have difficulty consistently addressing structural racism in LIS research, pedagogy, and practice. As a profession, librarianship still excludes and discourages participation by people of color within its ranks and its institutions. Since the 1960s, national organizations (including the U.S. federal government) have acknowledged the need for more racial and ethnic diversity in

recruiting, and have invested in building small cohorts of students of color across LIS programs (see for example, Medical Library Assistance Act of 1965, IMLS National Leadership Grants, ALA Spectrum Scholarship Program, and ARL/Society of American Archivists Mosaic Program). Unfortunately many these recruitment programs have been executed with little regard for the ways systems of racial exclusion are constructed and perpetuated (Cooke, 2014). Thus, these programs have been inconsistent, resulting in slow systemic change. This is acutely evident in libraries where the number of credentialed librarians of color has remained stagnant, and the number of white librarians has consistently hovered at 88 to 89 percent since 1990 (ALA, 2012). It is also evident in LIS education, where according to the ALISE (2015) statistical report, 65 percent of LIS faculty are white.

Compounding the lack of diversity within the profession are institutional practices which often lead librarians and faculty of color to feel marginalized, discriminated, and undervalued. As Brook et al (2015) note: “librarians of color have long ago identified that endemic racism in the profession is a crucial barrier to recruitment, retention, and job satisfaction” (p. 264). Librarians of color report having to navigate white cultural and social norms, experiencing high incidences of microaggressions, being required to conform to professional orientations that conflict with their cultural identities, and being expected to represent and speak for their entire racial or ethnic community (Brook et al, 2015; Curry, 1994; Espinal, 2001; Galvan, 2015; Gonzalez-Smith, Swanson & Tanaka 2014; Peet, 2016). Some even experience being labeled “‘the diversity hire’, thus erasing their skills, talents, and expertise” (Galvan, 2015, para. 6). Hathcock (2015) sums it up this way: for librarians of color, “playing at whiteness is still a requirement for career success” (para. 13). The continued inability (or unwillingness) of LIS programs and libraries to recruit and retain librarians of color is reflective of larger structural issues in LIS. Providing students with a foundation in critical race theory allows them to recognize the relationships between the cultural assumptions embedded in institutional norms, the policies and practices that result, and the subsequent exclusion of people of color.

From “Diversity” to Social Justice

Over the past twenty years, voices in the field have called for more open discussions about institutionalized racism and normative whiteness in LIS student, faculty and practitioner recruiting; tenure and promotion; research frameworks and methodologies; publication; and pedagogy (cf. Cooke, Sweeney, & Noble, 2016; Gilliland, 2011; Gollop, 1999; Jossey, 1991; Kumasi & Manlove, 2015). In 1999, Gollop noted the importance for *all* students enrolled in LIS programs to be exposed to issues of multiculturalism and diversity, not just those who self-select and enroll in courses that offer a broader cultural perspective. Pawley (2006) went further, arguing that we must decenter whiteness in the LIS curriculum by,

- Specifically focusing on race,
- Recruiting faculty with a scholarly interest in studying race and racism,
- Embracing critical pedagogies,
- Looking to other organizations for ideas, and
- Prioritizing “race as a matter of urgency (just as LIS prioritized technology in the last two decades of the twentieth century)” (p. 153).

Kumasi & Manlove (2015) concurred, calling on LIS administrators, faculty, and even students, to be advocates for LIS curriculum reform geared toward “integrating diversity- and social justice related concepts into the common core classes offered at ALA-accredited institutions” (p. 416). Most recently, Cooke, Sweeney, & Noble (2016) emphasized the need for LIS education to prioritize social justice values, epistemologies, and frameworks in order to train “critically minded, socially responsible, and culturally competent information professionals” (p. 121). That said, it is important that institutions avoid relying on faculty of color to teach about critical race frameworks, and to talk about issues of race in LIS. Instead, battling monoculturalism (Brook et al., 2015), and educating students about race should be shared among faculties as an institutional responsibility. Cooke, Sweeney, and Noble (2016) maintain that “it is necessary to shift the responsibility of confronting racism away from students and faculty of color to the entire community” (p. 120). Foundational and introductory courses provide one venue for demonstrating this shared institutional commitment.

This chapter examines one indicator of LIS programs’ commitment to discussing critical approaches to understanding race, and the ways that structures of power and privilege shape information science as research, pedagogy, and practice — the degree to which LIS programs have integrated readings from CRT and associated critical identity theories into required coursework. Looking at required courses bypasses (to some degree) the issues of students self- selecting into courses about race, and is also an indicator of the institutional commitment to educating students about these issues.

Methodology

We conducted quantitative and qualitative content analysis of foundational required readings for the top 20 MLS/MLIS programs (as ranked by US News and World Report). The sampling process was twofold. Initial sampling included development of the foundation course sample and secondary sampling included development of the sample of required readings. The goal of the sampling process was to identify required courses that were most likely to expose students to CRT and other critical theories.

Creating the Course Sample

We developed the initial sampling frame for the study from the top 20 ranked LIS programs according to the 2015 U.S. News and World Report (see Table 1 for the list of schools included in the sample). We created a list of required courses for each program as of Fall 2016 using publicly available data from MLS/MLIS program websites. When available online, graduate student handbooks or other official publications describing curricular or graduation requirements were used to build the required course list. The mean number of required courses was 4.45, with a minimum of 2 courses, a maximum of 8, and a mode of 3. We used the course titles and descriptions to select foundations courses which we believed were most likely to introduce CRT or critical concepts.

Table 1: Top 20 LIS Programs

Rank	University
#1	University of Illinois Urbana Champaign
#2	University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
#3	University of Washington
#4	Syracuse University
#4	University of Michigan - Ann Arbor
#6	Rutgers - New Brunswick
#6	University of Texas – Austin
#8	Indiana University – Bloomington
#9	Simmons College
#10	Drexel University
#10	University of Maryland - College Park
#10	University of Pittsburgh
#13	Florida State University
#14	University of California - Los Angeles
#15	University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee
#16	University of Wisconsin – Madison
#17	University of Tennessee – Knoxville
#18	Kent State University
#18	University of Alabama
#18	University of South Carolina

Defining “Foundations Courses”. The ALA defines the foundations of the profession in its report on core competencies of librarianship (American Library Association, 2009). The following are highlighted as foundational principles:

- Ethical values and foundational principles of librarianship
- Intellectual freedom and democracy
- History of libraries and librarianship
- Interactions between communication and librarianship
- Understanding types of library and information service organizations
- Connections between libraries, cultures, community, and society
- Legal and policy frameworks for libraries
- Advocacy, problem solving, and communication in libraries

This list is fairly expansive. At most institutions, these aims appeared to be distributed among multiple courses.

Because we were most interested in finding general introduction or foundations courses that were most likely to introduce students to CRT, we focused on courses that were required for graduation (or that were included in a list of possible required courses); covered foundational principles (as described by the ALA); and provided an introduction, overview, or other broad perspective on LIS. We excluded required courses that focused on information organization, management, collection development, or reference specifically. Courses that focused broadly on human information behavior or information and society were included. The following represents a sample of course titles that were included in the sampling frame:

- Introduction to the Library Professions
- Information and Information Environments
- Information in Social and Cultural Contexts
- Foundations of the Information Professions
- Information and Society
- Human Information Interactions

Out of the 20 ranked schools, three did not require any courses which fit our definition of a foundations course. For 18 of the ranked schools we identified at least one required foundations course; for three of the schools we identified two courses.

After identifying the foundations courses, we used publicly available information to identify at least one instructor at each institution who had taught the course over the previous year. We then sent an email asking the instructor to share a list of the required readings. We did not ask for course syllabi because some universities (and instructors) consider them to be proprietary information. Recognizing that courses are often taught by more than one instructor, and that different instructors sometimes require different readings, we asked each instructor to forward the message to any colleagues who had taught the course recently. Instructors at 14 of the 18 universities responded to our email request. We received a total of 19 reading lists (multiple instructors at 2 universities responded); 12 of the instructors chose to send the full course syllabus.

Analysis

For the purposes of this study, we identified the total number of readings in each course, the number of readings that incorporated CRT concepts, and the number of readings that incorporated critical frameworks or approaches. We defined CRT broadly to include works that addressed concepts listed in Table 2, even when they did not explicitly name CRT as the theoretical framework. When critical analysis is done well, it can be difficult to draw lines between types of critical theory. Intersectional analyses of race, ethnicity, gender, and class, use similar approaches and frameworks to examine foundational issues. We classified the category of “Critical Readings” as those that addressed concepts included in CRT, but excluded race. We excluded works on multiculturalism or diversity that did not include these concepts.

Table 2: CRT concepts

Race	CRT critiques “race blindness” (Crenshaw, 1991) and acknowledges racism as “endemic to American life” (Dixson & Rousseau, 2006, p. 9). CRT explicitly addresses race.
Voice, Story, and Counter-story	CRT privileges the experiential knowledge of people of color. Encourages development of participant voice, through personal stories (Matsuda, 1993; Dixson & Rousseau, 2006). Stories and counter-stories (as expressions of personal and collective voice) introduce, enforce, and reinforce social narratives. Different types of stories serve different social purposes (Cooke, 2016).
Social/Structural/Institutional Power & Oppression	CRT acknowledges social, financial, and political power as structural elements of social interactions (Giddens, 1984). Explores racism as structural oppression that combines an inherent belief in the superiority of one racial or ethnic group over another (or others) combined with the ability to take actions that benefit one group at the expense of the other (power) (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002).
Positionality	CRT explicitly acknowledges individuals as occupying social positions that hold inherent power. Marginalization is recognized as the exclusion of specific groups from the social “center” - a position that imbues individuals with the ability to determine social norms (Giddens, 1984; Vasas, 2005).
Neutrality as a Fallacy	CRT rejects the concept of neutrality, and examines institutional/social power structures that allow certain actors to define status quo (Matsuda, 1993, Dixson & Rousseau, 2006).

Intersectionality	CRT takes a multidimensional view of oppression. Originally coined by Crenshaw (1989) to describe oppression of black women, whose specific needs as women were not addressed by black civil rights movements, and whose needs as black people were largely ignored by feminist movements.
Importance of social and historical contexts	CRT challenges ahistorical approaches to research/teaching/practice, and favors social and historical contextualization (Dixon & Rousseau, 2006).
Interdisciplinary	As the examination of pervasive social relationships and power structures, CRT is fundamentally interdisciplinary (Solorzano, 1997).
Explicitly activist	CRT explicitly embraces anti-racism as a goal in research, practice, and teaching (Solorzano, 1997).

Findings

Stated Course Goals

We identified fairly consistent themes related to course scope and intended skill development, in the twelve syllabi we received that included course purpose/goal statements. Course scope was fairly broad, with some courses described as covering “major issues,” or focusing or “broad examinations” in the field of LIS. Alternatively, some courses were described as orienting or introducing students to the cultural, ontological, or epistemological perspective of their specific LIS school or program. A few of the courses explicitly focused on interactions between information and society or diverse users.

Course descriptions provided varied levels of attention to *skills* students would be expected to develop in the course. The three strongest themes were: developing the ability to analyze professional situations, understand professional issues, and understand and interact with patrons/users.

Number and Distribution of Readings

Total Readings. Across the sample of reading lists (n=19), the mean number of readings was 46 (not counting textbooks) (std dev=25.33), with a median of 45, a lower limit of 0 non-textbook readings and a maximum of 85 readings.

Critical Readings. The mean number of total critical (non-CRT) readings was 5.29 (std dev=5.67), with a median of 4, a mode of 0, a lower limit of 0 critical readings, and a maximum of 21 critical readings per course. An example of a reading we classified as critical but not CRT is Olin & Millet's (2015) "Gendered Expectations for Leadership in Libraries." This text examines gendered norms, and their influence on leadership roles within libraries. While it is based in a critical epistemology (in this case discussing social structure, power, and positionality as they relate to gender), it does not focus on race, or address issues of intersectionality in any meaningful way.

Another example of a reading that took a critical approach, but did not explicitly address race was Chatman's (1996) "The Impoverished Life-World of Outsiders." Chatman's work explores themes of individual and structural power, positionality, and social context, and applies them to examination of information seeking and access. Despite the article's reflection of themes consistent with contemporaneous work in black feminist literature, the piece de-prioritizes race as only one of many possible forms of the more colorblind (perhaps socially acceptable) concept of "insiders and outsiders." While Chatman (1996) associates the phenomenon with "ethnocentrism," she also associates it with "egoculture" and "exclusivism" (p. 194). Because of this deflection away from race, we classified this article as critical, but not CRT.

Table 3 shows the number of courses and the percentage of the readings which were identified as critical readings. A little over a quarter of the courses offered no exposure to critical theory or critical concepts. Of those that do, many were limited to the ALA statement of ethics.

Table 3. Percentage of Critical Readings

Percent Critical Readings	% of Courses (n=#of courses)
0%	26% (n=5)
1-3%	11% (n=2)
4-10%	26% (n=5)
11-20%	21% (n=4)
21-39%	11% (n=2)
40-50%	5% (n=1)

CRT Readings. The mean number of total CRT-related readings per course was 3 (std dev=4.54), with a mode of 0, median of 1, a lower limit of 0 and maximum of 18 CRT readings. Only one course required more critical theory (14) and CRT (18) readings than non-critical readings (3). An example of an article that we classified as CRT is "Trippin' Over the Color Line: The Invisibility of Race in Library and Information Studies" by Honma (2005). This article discusses the epistemological forms of racism that exist in LIS and explores the CRT concepts of white privilege, colorblindness, racism, power, oppression, voice, and social justice (among others).

The articles classified as CRT represented a number of disciplines including LIS, education, law, ethnic studies, and sociology as these examples demonstrate:

- Cooke, N.A., Sweeney, M. and Noble, S.U. Social Justice as Topic and Tool: An Attempt to Transform a LIS Curriculum and Culture. *Library Quarterly*. [LIS]
- hooks, b. (1994). Chapter 1. *Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom*. New York: Routledge. [Education]
- Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2006). Introduction. *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*. NYU Press. [Law]
- Omi, M., & Winant, H. (2014). *Racial Formation in the United States*. 3rd ed. New York: Routledge. [Ethnic studies, sociology]

CRT as a portion of the curriculum. Table 4 describes how many courses included given percentages of readings engaging CRT concepts. Of the reading lists examined, the majority (32%) included no readings that exposed students to CRT concepts. For many of the courses in the second lowest range (in which 1-3% of readings included CRT concepts), the only exposure to CRT concepts came from the ALA Core Values statement. It should be noted that the core values statement includes broad, minimal coverage of 11 values. Some of those values are related to the CRT concepts, while others are unrelated, and they are not addressed in depth on the Core Values webpage. Readers are not exposed to ideas about diversity, for example, as a practice in promoting equal access and anti-racism in libraries unless they select Diversity and leave the ALA Core Values page (For the ALA Policy Manual).

Table 4. CRT Readings

Percent CRT Readings	% of Courses (n=# of courses)
0%	32% (n=6)
1-3%	27% (n=5)
4-10%	26% (n=7)
11-20%	5% (n=1)
21-39%	5% (n=1)
40-50%	5% (n=1)

Popular CRT Readings. Out of 43 readings that fit the criteria for CRT, the following 5 were assigned in multiple courses:

- Olson, H. (2001). The power to name: Representation in library catalogs. *Signs*, 26(3), 639-668.
- Honma, T. (2005). Trippin' over the color line: The invisibility of race in library and information studies. *InterActions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies*, 1(2).
- Brown, M. K. (2003). *Whitewashing race: The myth of a color-blind society*. Univ of California Press.

- Bowker, G., & Star, S.L. (1999). *Sorting things out: Classification and its consequences*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press (Chapter 6)

Textbook Readings. Textbook readings were counted separately from other types of readings. Six courses used textbooks consistently throughout the course. Of those, 4 required at least 25 additional (non-textbook) readings. Textbook readings included very little critical theory and no CRT. The following textbooks were assigned:

- Rubin, R. (2016). *Foundations of library and information science* (Fourth ed.). Chicago: ALA Neal-Schuman.
- Ford, N. (2015). *Introduction to information behaviour*. London: Facet Publishing.
- Erdelez, S., Fisher, K. E., & McKechnie, L. (Eds.). (2005). *Theories of information behavior*. American Society for Information Science and Technology.
- Gleick, J. (2011). *The information: A history, a theory, a flood* (1st ed.). New York: Pantheon Books.
- Bell, S. S. (2015). *Librarian's guide to online searching: Cultivating database skills for research and instruction* (4th ed.). Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited.
- Bopp, R. E. (2011). *Reference and information services: An introduction* (4th ed.). Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited.
- Pressley, L. (2009). *So you want to be a librarian*. Duluth, MN: Library Juice Press.
- Bawden, D. (2012). *Introduction to information science*. London: Facet.
- Hirsh, S. (2015). *Information services today: An introduction*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

There was no correlation between rank of LIS program and the total number of readings ($r=-0.23$), CRT readings ($r=-0.08$) or critical readings ($r=-0.19$).

Discussion

A Reflection of Institutional Values. The vast majority of the required foundations courses examined provided students with little to no exposure to CRT or critical theory. For better or worse, foundational readings introduce students to the values and priorities of the LIS schools/programs and the LIS field by exposing them to the issues and questions we deem to be worthy of research (and reading). If the purpose of the foundation course is to give students a common base of knowledge upon which to build future study and practice, then LIS programs should include CRT and other critical literatures that help all students develop personal praxes grounded in a solid understanding of power and social structures. This is especially important for students who will go on to build systems (human and computer) that determine others' ability to access and use information. Ignoring concepts related to CRT (e.g., race, intersectionality, and power) represents tacit promotion of a colorblind epistemology and pedagogy that promotes whiteness as normative, dismisses discussions about minoritization and marginalization as disruptive or irrelevant (when they are necessary for building systems that are equitable), and "unwittingly perpetuate[s] the false narrative that their coursework is 'neutral' and 'unbiased' rather than ideologically and politically informed and racialized" (Cooke et al., 2016, p. 120). It also assumes that questions of race are outside of the work of information science. CRT, through its challenges to overtly positivist epistemologies and methodologies that embed the "knowledges of the upper and middle classes" (Yosso, 2006, p. 69), results in research, pedagogy, theory development, and praxis that is inclusive of the perspectives and values of people of color.

This study shows that inclusion of CRT and other critical approaches appears to vary depending on the interests of the instructor and by institution. A haphazard approach to curriculum planning inhibits our ability as a field to consistently produce practitioners and researchers who are able to critically engage with issues of race, employ transformative understandings of diversity, and provide inclusive, culturally responsive and anti-bias services. By ensuring that students are grounded in theoretically sound understandings of race, power, and privilege, we can help them create library spaces and programs that de-center normative whiteness, be mindful of the impact of their own implicit biases on their communities, and become aware of, and reach out with intentionality to communities that are not being served. Understanding this body of theory can help to ensure that faculty, graduate students, and librarians of color are not being unintentionally marginalized, discriminated against, or undervalued. This would improve the field's ability to recruit and retain faculty and librarians who are reflective of our increasingly diverse society.

Broad Contexts for CRT. Although CRT is often framed in terms of sociological examination of relationships between Black and White people in the United States, the more expansive corpus of CRT includes critical gender studies, critical disability studies, and critical racial and ethnic studies, such as LatCrit (Haney Lopez, 1996; Trucios-Haynes, 2000-01), AsianCrit (Museus and Iftikar, 2013), and TribalCrit (Brayboy, 2006). These literatures provide a rich source of background readings for coursework, and for instructors who would like greater exposure to CRT and its application across a diverse range of experiences. CRT is also interdisciplinary. The framework originated in legal research, but also has been used in education (Gillings, 2006), medicine and nursing (Kumagi & Lypson, 2009; Allen, 2010), social work (Jeffrey, 2005), and other fields.

While this study focused on readings assigned at universities in the United States (which have developed within the historical racial context of the United States), several of the CRT readings focused on international contexts. These readings explored issues such as apartheid in South Africa, colonization, and the dominance of Eurocentric history. This work, and these movements, demonstrate that critical analysis of race is not limited to U.S. contexts.

Limitations

The primary limitation of the study was the fairly restricted sampling protocol, which limited the data to required readings from one or two required foundations courses for the top 20 MLS/MLIS programs. Foundations courses among LIS programs vary widely, and variations in the number of required courses among programs made direct comparisons among all required courses difficult. Thus, our ability to draw conclusions about student exposure to CRT across the curriculum of each school based on this data is limited, as critical theories and CRT might be incorporated into other required courses (such as research methods or reference services). Additionally, we cannot be certain that students were not exposed to CRT through lectures, discussions, or student presentations (even in the absence of assigned readings). That said, not grounding classroom discussions in the research literature might leave students with the impression that lectures are based on instructor experiences and opinions, rather than situated in an expansive and rigorous body of research. Finally, the data does not provide sufficient context to draw conclusions about the

depth to which students were expected to engage with the assigned material (even in cases where readings were assigned).

Conclusion and Recommendations

CRT and its related concepts provide a structural framework for preparing LIS students and graduates to recognize and address racism, to understand “how power and privilege shape LIS institutions and professional practice” (Cooke et al, 2016, p. 107), and to embrace social justice as an LIS value (Cooke et al, 2016; Pawley, 2006; Schroeder & Hollister, 2014). Incorporating CRT into existing courses is a first step in pushing the profession in this direction.

Many of the authors cited in this chapter incorporate CRT and other critical theories in their scholarship and teaching, and their work provides a rich source of readings for coursework. Additionally, a number of journals within the LIS field, including *Library Journal*, *The Progressive Librarian*, *Library Trends*, and *In the Library with the Lead Pipe*, regularly publish articles that utilize CRT and other critical theoretical frameworks and methodologies, present diverse perspectives, and challenge the dominant narrative of libraries as neutral institutions. The new *Journal of Critical Library and Information Studies* and *Research on Diversity in Youth Literature* journal are among newly created venues for work written from the CRT perspective. Library Juice Press, an imprint of Litwin Books, LLC, specializes in publishing manuscripts that explore theoretical and practical issues in librarianship from a critical perspective, and thus is another source for course readings. There are also a growing number of conferences and symposia such as the Critical Librarianship & Pedagogy Symposium (held in Tucson, AZ in 2016), the National Diversity in Libraries Conference (sponsored by UCLA and ACRL in 2016), the National Conference of African American Librarians (the Joint Conference of Librarians of Color (JCLC; scheduled for 2018), and the Conference on Inclusion and Diversity in Library and Information Science (held annually at the University of Maryland iSchool), that provide opportunities for LIS faculty and practitioners to explore issues related to diversity and inclusion, often from a CRT perspective. Finally, since LIS is an interdisciplinary field, seminal readings in CRT from other disciplines, such as law, education, and sociology provide an understanding of the “how” and “why” of CRT scholarship and practice that is applicable to LIS scholarship and practice. Examples include *Handbook of Critical Race Theory in Education*, edited by Marvin Lynn and Adrienne D. Dixson (New York, Routledge, 2013), *Critical Race Theory*, edited by Crenshaw et al. (1995), and “Storytelling for Oppositionists and Others: A Plea for Narrative” by Richard Delgado (Michigan Law Review, 87(Aug 1989), 2411-2441). Although LIS lags behind other fields in its understanding and use of CRT, incorporating work from other fields can serve as a stopgap, to enrich LIS curricula as CRT becomes more broadly integrated into information science research, and rich information theories informed by CRT are further developed. If LIS is to remain relevant, and produce professionals and researchers who can lead in their communities (whether those communities are racially diverse, or not), we must assess and improve our engagement with issues of race and racism in all areas of the field.

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